

# **Proposal Outline of Safety Program Concepts**

## **Submitted to the Montana Labor Management Workers Compensation Advisory Committee by Jason Miller on 5/515/07**

- The Montana Department of Labor and Industry needs to take a leading role in reducing the overall incident rate in Montana.
- The DLI run program must work towards standardizing safety training for all Montana Businesses and their employees, recognizing that there are 'core' areas of safety training common to all as well as areas of training that are specialized according to occupation. It must be recognized that this type of program will take time and resources to bring about.
- The DLI program could work in two different ways. First, the department could work with membership organizations that have existing safety programs in order to 'certify' those programs as meeting the standard that might result in a reduced workers compensation rate. Second, the department could assist in organizing clusters of small businesses that are not involved in a membership organization in order to give those businesses access to 'certified' training programs. Efficiency is important in either case, therefore the department could create a train-the-trainer program whereby a person employed or volunteering for a membership organization would be 'authorized' to deliver 'certified' training.
- The certification process is critical in making the process effective. Certification must be meaningful in regard to real safety condition at any particular worksite as well as valuable in regard to the reduction of rates. Ultimately the certification could have like currency like status, where it is recognized for a certain economic value.
- Creating 'buy-in' will require a multifaceted approach which may include: an ongoing public relations and education campaign as well as solid relationship building with membership organizations, individual businesses, insurance carriers and other stakeholders as well as the general public.
- "Buy-in" will also require an approach that is initially much more incentive oriented than punitive.
- There is a need for employers who may have been marginal or bad in their safety practices to have an 'amnesty' period, or a way to get on the right track without subjecting themselves to immediate liability.
- After a certain amount of time and opportunities to participate in safety programs, there is a need to sanction bad actors.
- Workers who feel unsafe or uneasy about the safety practices of their employer need to have recourse. The DLI eventually needs to be able to be the facilitator and problem solver of imminent danger and last resort.
- All of these practices should be tailored toward an agreed upon goal. For discussion the goal could be: reducing the overall incident rate in Montana to within the national average over the next five years.
- There are three cost considerations in regard to a safety program of this magnitude. First, how do we pay for it? Second, how much money will an effective safety program save us over time? Third, what will we do with the cost savings surplus that may appear as the result of a hopefully dramatic reduction of incident rates?